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THE MARKET BASKET
by
Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

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PLAIN FACTS ABOUT EGGS

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Now is a good time for homemakers to check up on some plain facts about eggs. For eggs are one of the best buys on the market at present and probably will be for at least four more months. The reason is that egg production is starting its annual springtime spurt upwards.

"Take advantage of abundant supplies of eggs and low egg prices whenever they occur," suggests Dr. Lela E. Booher, nutritionist of the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

"Eggs are a bargain package of food value at any time," explains Dr. Booher. "They are good body builders because of the efficient protein in their yolks and their whites. The yolks are especially rich in iron -- the mineral that helps to form red blood cells. They are an important source of calcium, another mineral that's likely to be low in diets in this country. Eggs are also a rich source of phosphorus, and are a good source of riboflavin (vitamin G). For good measure, other vitamins are always present -- vitamins A and D varying in amounts depending on what the hen had to eat. Modern poultrymen see to it that their hens are liberally supplied with vitamins A and D.

"For those reasons," Dr. Booher recommends, "an egg a day for everyone in the family is a good rule to follow. If that isn't possible, try to get at least 4 or 5 eggs a week into the diet of every child. See that adults get at least 3 or 4 eggs a week."

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It is seldom wise to buy more than a week's supply of eggs at one time. If possible, buy eggs from a store that keeps them in the refrigerator up until the time they are sold. Put the eggs in a refrigerator or other cool place as soon as you get them home.

Buy the highest quality eggs for frying, poaching, and cooking in the shell. If you want to save money by buying the less expensive eggs, use good eggs of lower quality for other types of cooking.

Color of shell has nothing to do with egg quality, say the experts. A good egg may be brown or white of shell. A new-laid egg usually has a "bloom" on it, is dull and soft-looking rather than flossy and smooth.

In a good egg broken from its shell, the yolk stands up firmly. The white is nearly colorless and stands up well around the yolk. The germ spot should be undeveloped or only slightly developed -- a tiny spot somewhere on the yolk. As the egg deteriorates, it flattens out and the germ spot may get larger.

The homemaker who follows the practice of cooking all egg dishes at a low temperature is well on her way to mastering egg-cooking technique. The delicate protein in egg becomes tough when it is cooked for too long a time or at too high temperatures.

Today's version of yesterday's tough hard-boiled eggs are tender eggs, hard-cooked in simmering water. For these, use just enough water to cover the eggs well. Start the eggs in cold water. Bring the water to the simmering point and keep it there for about 30 minutes. For soft-cooked eggs, simmer for 3 to 5 minutes. Never let the water boil.

The unsightly green line between the yolk and the white of hard cooked eggs can be cut down and often eliminated by cooking the eggs in simmering water, then putting them into cold water immediately.

First rule for egg-poaching success also is "never let the water boil while the eggs are in it." Have the water deep enough to come up over the top of the eggs. Break the eggs just before you poach them. Poach only topnotch eggs.

For fried eggs, omelets, and scrambled eggs -- keep the heat low under a thick frying pan. Or scramble in the top of a double boiler.

Keep soft custards from overcooking by stirring them constantly, cooking them over hot but not boiling water, and taking them off the heat and setting them in cold water as soon as they coat a spoon. Bake a custard in a pan of water in a moderate over (350°F). Souffles, angel food cakes, and sponge cakes need a very moderate oven, about 325°F. Bake fruit whips in a very slow over (250°F.) set in a pan of water.

When eggs and starch are both used to thicken a pudding or a pie filling, cook the mixture thoroughly with the starch in it before adding the eggs. Eggs take much less time to thicken than do cornstarch and flour.

A troubling problem to some cooks is how to get a good pie meringue. Too high oven temperatures and the wrong proportion of sugar to egg white are two common causes of meringue failure. The Bureau of Home Economics recommends the following procedure for a good pie meringue.

Get the eggs out of the refrigerator ahead of time, so they will be at room temperature by the time they are to be beaten. Separate the whites from the yolks carefully so that no bit of yolk gets into the white. Have the beater clean -- free from egg yolk or other fat.

Two egg whites are about the right amount for one pie. Beat the whites until they take a definite shape in the bowl and stand up by themselves in little peaks. The eggs at this point should be glossy and moist, and would still flow easily out of the bowl if you tipped it.

Next beat in 2 tablespoons of sugar for each egg white, a few grains of salt, and a drop or two of vanilla. Spread this over the top of the pie to the edge of the crust. Bake in a moderate over (325° to 350°F.) for 15 to 20 minutes or until the meringue is light brown.

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THE MARKET BASKET
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BUYING COTTON SHIRTS

A good shirt is a joy to the man who wears it and a satisfaction to the woman who "does it up."

"To insure a comfortable fit and long wear in a shirt--and to save washday and ironing headaches, learn to recognize the marks of quality before you buy," suggests Margaret Smith, specialist in textiles and clothing of the Bureau of Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

In the following paragraphs Miss Smith tells some of the things a person should find out about a shirt before spending his money. Find these facts by examining the shirt closely, by reading labels, by asking questions, and insisting on clear-cut answers from the salesperson or the buyer.

What Kind of Material?

Most shirts are made of cotton— the finer shirtings for dress or business wear, heavier shirtings for work shirts. Best cottons for shirts are those with a firm, smooth weave. Long floats or loose or fuzzy threads indicate a weak cloth.

Look on the label for shrinkage facts. Good quality shirts are preshrunk in all parts. According to Federal Trade Commission regulations any cotton material marked "preshrunk" and which will shrink further should carry the statement "will not shrink more than ____ percent." To keep their fit, shirts should be guaranteed not to shrink more than 2 percent.

When you buy a colored shirt, read labels for facts about colorfastness. Shirts should be fast to light, washing, and perspiration. A shirt labeled "vat

dyed" usually is fast color.

How It's Made

Check the following strategic parts of the shirt. Take out pins if you have to to look at each part.

THE COLLAR.—Get the right height to suit the wearer. Collars are made for long, average, and short necks. See that collar points are sharp, evenly stitched, and lie flat as possible. A good feature you'll find on some shirts is "quilting" along the neckband. This is several rows of machine stitching to keep the neckband from crumpling down on the neck. Interlining of the collar should be fully shrunk as the outer material.

THE FRONT PLEAT.—Here again, the shirt can be ironed flat and look neat only if the interlining is preshrunk to the same extent as the outer cloth. Firm and securely stitched buttonholes, large enough to slip over buttons easily should be in the exact center of this pleat. If there is a design or pattern in the material, this should be matched up along the edge of the pleat.

Best buttons for business shirts are of pearl, four-holed, and sewed on securely. Pearl or composition buttons are suitable for work shirts. Avoid metal buttons, because they will rust as soon as the paint wears off. Also steer clear of compressed paper buttons, or unevenly shaped pearl buttons.

THE SLEEVE.—Make sure the sleeve is cut straight--that is, the lengthwise thread of the material runs parallel to the top creases of the sleeve. Any sleeve fullness should be worked in neatly at the back of the cuff-either in pleats or gathers. The placket in the sleeve needs to be long enough so the cuff can be laid out flat to iron.

BACK.—Make sure there is plenty of room in the back to allow free arm action. Backs of most work shirts are cut in one piece. Good business shirts have a generous yoke, with a full-cut lower back. Lower back fullness may be eased on

to the yoke so it is hardly noticeable. Or it may be set in as pleats or gathers. These need to be located over the shoulder blades--not in the exact center back. The yoke of most well-cut shirts is rounded higher at the center back, which makes the lower back a little longer in the center to accommodate the natural rounding of shoulder muscles.

SEAMS AND STITCHING.--Look closely at all the seams, for poor stitching is one of the easiest ways to detect poor workmanship. The stitching should be close and even, with no knots either on the right or wrong side. Work shirts should be triple-stitched at the seams with from 12 to 16 stitches to the inch. There should be about 18 to 20 stitches per inch on business shirts.

Getting A Good Fit

Full-cut shirts fit better. To check this, look first at the shirt tails. If these are skimpy, the whole shirt probably is cut small. Shirt tails should be well-rounded with back and front the same length. On work shirts, tails are not cut so long as they are on business shirts. Nor should skimpily cut shirts be confused with brands of shirts that are cut smaller in some places especially for slender men.

Shirt sizes are ordinarily stamped on the collar or the left lower front. Collar size is stamped first--then sleeve length. For instance, 15--34 or 15--4 mean the shirt is 15 inches around the neck and has a 34-inch sleeve length.

To be sure of getting the right shirt size for a man, measure an old shirt that fits well. For the neck measurement, lay the collar flat and measure the inside of the neckband from center of the button to the far end of the buttonhole. For sleeve length, measure from the center of the back yoke to the lower edge of the cuff.

Since boys are growing, it is best to measure them each time for size. Get the sleeve length by having the boy hold his arm out straight at the side, measuring from the large bone in the back of the neck to the wrist bone. Get neck size by putting the tape measure snugly where the collar usually rests. Sometimes it's a good idea to measure chest size, too.

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"ENRICHED" FLOUR AND BREAD

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When a kitchen staple undergoes a major change -- that's news to the homemaker who keep up with the times.

White flour and white bread right now are undergoing such a change. They are coming to market in a new "enriched" form with a higher vitamin and mineral content than ordinary white flour or white bread. These vitamins and minerals are valuable from the standpoint of family nutrition -- and every homemaker who wants to make sure of getting "enriched" flour and bread should know some of the basic facts about them.

In the following questionnaire, Dr. Louise Stanley, chief of the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, answers some pertinent questions about the new flour and bread.

Q. How does "enriched" flour differ from ordinary white flour?

A. Nutritionally, it differs in vitamin and mineral content. That is, it must have a certain amount of thiamin chloride (vitamin B_1), nicotinic acid (pellagra-preventive factor), and iron. Two of the other ingredients that may be in the "enriched" flour are calcium and riboflavin.

In taste, the new flour cannot be distinguished from plain white flour. In looks, flour that has been "enriched" by the addition of vitamin and mineral concentrates after it has been milled resembles plain white flour. On the other hand,

flour "enriched" by a modification of the milling process so as to retain a larger amount of the grain -- particularly those parts richest in vitamins and minerals -- will be a light creamy color rather than pure white.

Q. Why were these particular vitamins and minerals selected?

A. They were chosen because they are the food values we logically should expect bread and other flour products to contribute to our diets. They are all present in the original wheat -- but are removed in making refined white flour. Chief among nutrients lost are thiamin, nicotinic acid, and iron. These may all be added to flour at little or no extra cost. Bread that contains 6 or 8 percent of milk solids will often come up to the minimum standards for the riboflavin and calcium.

Q. Who has set up the standards for "enriched" flour?

A. The standards for flour have been proposed in the hearings of the Food and Drug Administration, but they have not been established officially by the government. They have, however, been considered by the members of the Committee on Foods and Nutrition of the National Research Council, many of whom testified in the hearings before the Food and Drug Administration. Members of this committee have recommended these standards as desirable. They have met with representatives of the milling and baking industries and the standards proposed are being used in the flour appearing on the market.

This same committee, working in an advisory capacity to the Administrator of Health and Welfare in the National Defense program, will consider putting back important nutrients into others of our common refined foods in order to improve the diets of the people of this country. Bread and flour were considered first, because such a large amount of them is eaten, especially by families on low-cost diets.

Q. Is there any way I can make sure I am getting this bread or flour at the store?

A. Yes, read labels. It is only when a flour or bread is labeled "enriched" that you can be sure it contains at least the minimum amounts of thiamin chloride, nicotinic acid, and iron set by the standard. Many manufacturers are putting on their labels the amounts of these nutrients that are in their products.

The minimum standards for "enriched" flour per pound are: Thiamin chloride --1.66 milligrams; nicotinic acid--6.15 milligrams; and iron--6.15 milligrams.

Since bread is about two-thirds flour, a pound loaf of "enriched" bread will have approximately two-thirds as much of each of these nutrients as has flour. Or, a 1-pound loaf of bread must have at least: --1 milligram thiamin chloride; 4 milligrams nicotinic acid; and 4 milligrams of iron to be called "enriched."

Q. Why isn't whole-wheat flour being enriched?

A. Whole-wheat flour made from good, sound wheat already exceeds the mimimum standards for at least two of the three required substances that are being included in the new "enriched" white flours. Since all the nutrients of the wheat are retained in whole-wheat flour there is no reason for enrichment.

Q. What is the place of "enriched" bread or flour in the diet?

A. They are filling the same place they always have filled, but with new qualifications. As always, they are cereal products that supply a lot of energy inexpensively. As part of a well-balanced diet, they should be used along with other well-selected foods from other food groups -- fruits and vegetables, milk, eggs, meat, and fats, sweets, and water. It is to low cost diets that the new bread and flour will probably make their greatest contribution. For these diets are the ones that are usually high in cereals, and most likely to be low in the vitamins and minerals that the "enriched" bread and flour supply.

Q. In plain language, about how much vitamin B_1 could a person get from "enriched" bread?

A. If he ate about 6 medium-sized slices a day, and the bread were "enriched" the minimum amount, he would get about one-third milligram of vitamin B_1. According to what we know now, an adult needs about 2 milligrams a day. Obviously, bread or flour products that have been "enriched" make a valuable source of vitamin B_1. But they must not be counted on as sole sources.

Q. If I do my own baking, is there any way I can make my own "enriched" bread?

A. Yes, buy "enriched" flour or whole-wheat flour and use it. If you use milk as the liquid, you will also be adding calcium and riboflavin. Yeast also is a valuable source of vitamin B_1.

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TIPS ON CONSERVING
KITCHEN ALUMINUM

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Homemakers, in more ways than one, are taking part in the national defense program. Because aluminum is absolutely necessary in making certain vital defense equipment, its use for civilian purposes is being limited temporarily. "Civilian purposes," of course, include kitchen utensils as well as household goods of all kinds.

"Fortunately, limiting the aluminum that can be used in kitchen utensils works no great hardship on homemakers," says Dr. Louise Stanley, Chief of the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. "For, in addition to the supply of aluminum utensils already made up -- there are available utensils of many other satisfactory materials."

For top-of-the-stove cooking, there are utensils of porcelain-enamelware, cast iron, and flame-proof glass. For oven cooking, there are these and in addition, tin, earthenware, heat-proof glass, Russia iron, and sheet steel.

Whether the homemaker is outfitting a whole kitchen or replacing a worn-out utensil or two, the following are some points to keep in mind.

For top-of-the-stove cooking, utensils of porcelain-enamelware are the cheapest and are satisfactory for most uses. Saucepans, double boilers, kettles, and frying pans of enamelware come in many varying qualities and a wide range of prices. Higher prices may mean a better quality of porcelain-enamel with an acid-

resistant finish, or they may mean merely more pleasing colors, fancier handles, or unusual shapes.

To get the best wear out of enamel pots and pans, treat them carefully to prevent chipping. That is, never let them boil dry. Cool them before washing. And let a hot utensil cool before pouring cold water into it. When food sticks to enamelware, soak it loose by boiling water or a weak solution of soda in it. Never scrape it with a sharp-edged instrument or use a coarse abrasive on it.

Another inexpensive material for top-of-the-stove utensils is iron. This is considerably heavier than aluminum, enamelware, or glass. Iron heats up slowly and holds the heat well. For that reason it is an excellent material for utensils used for long, slow cooking, such as Dutch ovens. Also because it holds and distributes heat well, iron makes good skillets, frying pans, and griddles.

Manufacturers usually include directions for "seasoning" an iron utensil. It is important to follow these directions, because seasoning of iron by covering it with a non-salty fat and heating it at low temperature for two or three hours makes the utensil more resistant to rust. To prevent rust also, always dry an iron kettle thoroughly before putting it away.

Clean iron utensils with hot soapsuds. Use an abrasive such a fine steel wool only to remove food that sticks to the pan or rust that may have formed on it.

Since manufacturers have perfected a glass that is "flame-proof," this material is coming into more general use for top-of-the-stove cooking. Glass is easy to clean, heats up slowly, but holds the heat well. On the market now are flame-proof glass double boilers, sauce-pans, and frying pans in small sizes. The saucepans have removable handles so that the utensil may be used both as a cooking and a serving dish. In cooking with glass utensils the food continues to cook even after taking the pan off the fire, so watch it carefully.

For oven cooking, satisfactory cake pans and cookie sheets are made of tin, re-tinned steel, enamel, and glass. Pie pans are available in tin, glass, and enamelware. Shallow open pans for roasting tender meat are made of Russia iron or enamelware. For cooking less tender meat in the oven, covered pans of the same material may be used. Baking dishes and deep baking pans come in enamelware, oven-proof earthenware, and glass. Glass and heavy earthenware casseroles hold the heat well and may be used both for cooking and serving dishes.

When cleaning tin utensils, remember that the foundation of them is iron and the tin coating is relatively thin. Therefore it is best not to try to keep them bright. For in scouring for brightness, the tin coating is scratched off, leaving the iron exposed so that it will rust easily. If food is burnt on a tin pan, remove it by soaking or by heating the pan for a few minutes in a weak soda solution, then washing it thoroughly with soap and water.

One of the best ways, of course, to help conserve the nation's supply of aluminum is to take good care of aluminum utensils already in the kitchen. Keep aluminum utensils clean and bright with steel wool or fine, smooth scouring powder. Remove discoloration on aluminum by boiling it in water to which vinegar or cream of tartar has been added, or by cooking in it acid foods such as tomatoes, apple-sauce, or rhubarb. Avoid strong soaps and scouring powders that contain alkaline salts, because alkali darkens aluminum.

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